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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 004039

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: CONTINUED FRENCH CONCERNS ON BAGHDAD AIRPORT ROAD ACCESS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2035

[B](#). PARIS 2793

[C](#). BAGHDAD 1669

[D](#). PARIS 2661

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This message contains a guidance request in para 4.

[1](#)2. (C) On the margins of a June 7 discussion on deliverables for the U.S.-EU conference on Iraq (septel), MFA DAS-equivalent for Iraq/Iran/Arabian Gulf Affairs Antoine Sivan raised continuing GoF security concerns on access to the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) road, which he said was the subject of high-level GoF demarches being delivered in Washington. Sivan described changes implemented in mid-May to expedite BIAP access (ref a) as a slight improvement, but concluded that the situation remained unsatisfactory to the GoF and French embassy in Baghdad. Sivan asserted that the new arrangements had given French embassy cars the ability to travel just 50 meters on the U.S. military "express road/DoD lane," at which point the cars had to veer off and go through a round of checkpoints and then proceed on a non-express road. Sivan produced a diagram, written in English, to illustrate the situation. He repeated the complaint, issued in earlier French demarches to us (refs b and d) of unfair treatment, and asserted that Coalition embassies in Baghdad, as well as private U.S. companies, had DoD badges which allowed them complete access to the military "express road," without having to get off at the 50 meters point and go through checkpoints.

[1](#)3. (C) Without offering further detail, Sivan said the new French demarche had been prompted by a June 1 incident at a BIAP road checkpoint at which a car bomb exploded, with French vehicles in the vicinity and stuck in a checkpoint backlog. The bottom line, said Sivan, was that the GoF did not consider the issue resolved, "as the Secretary had assured FM Barnier," and that the GoF wanted the same DoD badges for its embassy as those used by other Coalition embassies, which would allow access to the full length of the military "express road." The continued problems in accessing the airport road made it difficult for the French embassy to carry out its business, especially bringing in visitors and supplies. Poloff agreed to convey Sivan's concerns to Washington, but also stressed that checkpoint issues remained a sensitive and complicated issue in Iraq, with repeated insurgent attacks making the BIAP road one of the most dangerous routes in the country. Poloff also observed that new access procedures implemented in May apparently had been initially welcomed by the French embassy in Baghdad, a view which Sivan said was no longer the case.

[1](#)4. (C) Action request: We would appreciate guidance from Washington which we can use to respond to French concerns on BIAP access. We note that this is the third demarche we have received on this issue since January, and that the GoF maintains that it has a high-level U.S. commitment to resolve the BIAP access issue and correct the practice of "unequal treatment" between Coalition and non-Coalition embassies. End action request.

WOLFF